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ABSTRACT

The Pennsylvania State Coalition for Adult Literacy's Building Communities for Learning (BCL) Project was conducted to improve the delivery of adult basic and literacy education services through interagency collaboration and community-based planning at the local level. The project awarded community-based planning grants to locales through a competitive request for proposals process, and provided training and ongoing technical assistance to grant recipients to help them develop community-based planning groups and interagency collaboration. As a result, three additional sites were awarded BCL grants, received training and technical assistance, and are in the process of developing interagency collaborations. There are now 13 active BCL sites and all are beginning to see positive outcomes as a result of interagency collaboration and community-based planning efforts. Clients are being served more effectively and efficiently and are, therefore, less frustrated with the system, leading to increases in client participation and retention. The BCL Project will continue to assist communities in establishing interagency collaboration to improve the delivery of adult basic and literacy education services. (Case studies of seven sites selected as representative of the project were compiled through evaluation methods that included questionnaires and self-assessments and are included.) (KC)

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BUILDING COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING

PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT AND BCL CASE STUDIES

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PRODUCT
FISCAL YEAR 1998-99

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PENNSYLVANIA STATE COALITION FOR ADULT LITERACY

CENTER FOR LITERACY, INC.
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Federal grant amount: $25,771

Contract number: 98-99-9005

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ABSTRACT PAGE

Project No: 98-99-9005
Grant Recipient: Center for Literacy, Inc.
636 S. 48th St., Philadelphia, PA 19143
(215) 474-1235
Program Name: Building Communities for Learning
Grant Allocation: $25,771
Project Period: July 1, 1998 - June 30, 1999
Project Director: Sheila M. Sherow

Project Purpose: The Pennsylvania State Coalition for Adult Literacy's Building Communities for Learning (BCL) Project proposed to improve the delivery of adult basic and literacy education services through interagency collaboration and community-based planning at the local level. The primary purpose of the project was to award community-based planning grants to locales through a competitive Request for Proposals process and to guide grantees in the establishment of community-based planning groups and the development of interagency collaboration with training and ongoing technical assistance.

Project Outcomes: Three additional sites were awarded BCL grants, received training and technical assistance, established community-based planning groups, and are in the process of developing interagency collaboration. There are now 13 active BCL sites, all are beginning to see positive outcomes resulting from interagency collaboration and community-based planning efforts. Clients are being served more effectively and efficiently in local systems of services that are capable of meeting the multiple needs of adult learners. All sites are working in collaboration with Team PA *CareerLink* efforts.

Impact: BCL sites reported that their interagency collaboration and planning efforts have improved the delivery of services; clients are entering programs quickly, can navigate among services easily, and are having their many needs met through a range of coordinated services. BCL sites also reported that adult learners are less frustrated and, as a result, client participation and retention in programs are increasing.

Products Developed: BCL 1998-99 Final Report, BCL 1998-99 Program Evaluation Report and BCL Case Studies.

Products Available From: AdvancE State Literacy Resource Center
333 Market St., 11th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
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Project Continuation and Future Implications: The BCL Project will continue to assist communities in establishing interagency collaboration for the purpose of improving the delivery of adult basic and literacy education services.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Interagency collaboration and community-based planning are essential to the development of coordinated and comprehensive delivery systems of services. Communities must be guided and supported in the establishment of community-based planning groups, the development of interagency collaboration, and the implementation of strategic plans for the improvement of adult basic and literacy education services.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING
1998-99 PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

This evaluation report discusses the results of Building Communities for Learning (BCL) project evaluations. Evaluation findings have been summarized in principles for community-based reform. These principles are further supported and validated by the work of *New Futures*, a project developed and supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (1995) and the National Workforce Assistance Collaborative (1998).

BCL Principles for Creating Change through Community-Based Planning

The following principles encompass the process of effecting change through community-based planning efforts.

- Change is constant and continually creates a need for service or system reform measures.
- Reform begins with each agency's realization and acceptance of the need for change, and can only be implemented when all stakeholder agencies commit to change.
- Interagency collaboration is the means to design and implement meaningful change.
- Coalitions are the foundation for interagency collaboration and, to be successful, must involve the willing and active participation of all stakeholders.
- Collaboration and coalition-building are difficult change processes and, at the local level, require external support for credibility, legitimacy, and political objectivity, as well as to provide incentives, technical assistance, and funding.
- Local ownership is critical to the success of community-planning coalitions and must be promoted by external support entities.
- Significant preparation and planning time is needed to develop interagency collaboration and establish coalitions—insufficient time is detrimental to the overall success of constituency-building and the change process.
- The success of community-based planning projects must be measured along two dimensions: (1) the initial work of interagency collaboration, coalition-building, and the development of a change process and (2) the success of coalitions in achieving longer-term outcomes resulting from the change process.

Related Findings of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *New Futures* Community Planning Project

At the onset of *New Futures*, the Casey Foundation identified two complex factors that presented barriers to the delivery of effective and efficient services to address the multiple needs of at-risk children and their families.

1. Existing services and support systems, despite their growing expenditures,

were unacceptably ineffective and inefficient in meeting the goals for children and families.

2. Failures to meet goals were due, at least in part, to deficiencies in the transactions between providers and clients, largely due to the fact that all too often these transactions were:

- Narrowly organized to respond to categorically defined problems and isolated from other relevant needs and circumstances;
- Rewarded for expensive institutional interventions at the expense of preventive and community-based ones; and
- Evaluated on the basis of the number of persons served or services provided instead of the quality of services or outcomes.

In alignment with the rationales underlying Team PA *CareerLink* and ABLE's current community-based planning initiatives, the Foundation had a vision of a better system of services—a system of integrated services that would be tailored to individual client needs; flexible in the provision of coordinated, comprehensive responses to interrelated needs; and available in communities and in settings that would allow easy client access and simplified client intake.

The Foundation has always believed that existing services can not be changed to more effective ones, on a significant scale, unless the systems that determine services are changed first. In the case of *New Futures*, system reform involved:

- The pooling of funding and blending of program boundaries;
- Decentralization of resource decisions;
- Development of collaborative governing bodies to make decisions regarding services across systems;
- Enhancement of the flexibility, discretion, and community "rootedness" of frontline decision making and practice; and
- Agreement on genuine and uniform accountability measures for outcomes.

The Foundation awarded grants to cities for the purpose of establishing a planning committee that would, in turn, create collaborative governing bodies that represented a broad cross-section of services—much like the design of the BCL project. These collaboratives were to have the authority to pool funding and consolidate programs, thereby allowing agencies to cross boundaries, blend their work, and coordinate services. The belief was that cities had the capacity to increase the flexibility and responsiveness of agencies and, ultimately, improve the delivery and outcomes of services.

In 1995, after seven years of implementation of the *New Futures* project, the Casey Foundation published *The Path of Most Resistance: Reflections on Lessons Learned from New Futures*, which describes the results of the project in terms of eight lessons learned about system reform and community planning:

1. Comprehensive reforms are very difficult.
2. It takes time. The complexity of reaching both conceptual and practical consensus among diverse public, private, and community stakeholders requires

significant time. Insufficient time does not allow for all stakeholders to be included and, as a result, those excluded have no allegiance to the group or its vision and the success of community-based change is severely compromised.

3. Community readiness is critical in the timing and pace of reform efforts. There must be a conviction that change is needed and will benefit clients, and a core leadership must be in place to articulate the initiative, build consensus, manage the change process, weather the storms, and continually refine and redesign the effort without losing stakeholder support.
4. Building local ownership is no simple matter and is complicated by the external support needed for resource and technical support. External financial support should provide enough money to attract attention, provide credibility and legitimacy, to compensate for time spent on the initiative, to keep stakeholders engaged, to even the playing field in terms of no one institution controlling the initiative due to its financial status, and to leverage other funds. External technical assistance should be available to convey accurate and complete information and to guide the change process. As such, external support works best when it is deployed according to local judgement and must not become an obstacle to local ownership and local control of the agenda. A balance between serving as a knowledgeable, outside catalyst and promoting local buy-in, commitment, and leadership is imperative as change will usually result in the reassignment of local dollars.
5. Plans must be refined and modified. No plan, however well conceived, can, in all situations or for extended periods of time, guide the change process without significant re-thinking and re-directing.
6. Communicate the progress of the reform initiative. The Foundation found that the real focus of the *New Futures* project—constituency building (collaboration) and the change process—were most often overlooked as the intended outcomes. The project suffered from both premature accolades and criticisms, as they were often unfairly judged based on benchmarks that were not accurate measures of intended outcomes; unfortunately, attention was too often given to long-term outcomes or lasting improvements that would come only after the change process had been implemented.
7. Real change often depends on increases in economic opportunity and social capital. In some low-income communities, reform efforts need social capital and economic development initiatives to target the whole community. In these communities, there are too few examples, rewards, opportunities, or incentives for success.
8. Stay at it. The bottom line is that system reform is a complex process and there is no substitute for adequate time.

The Casey Foundation concluded that while the *New Futures* model has no means to prove the validity of its system change paradigm, there is nothing that disproves or erodes it. In fact, the *New Futures* paradigm appears to be the only

feasible way of addressing the system reform necessary to address the changing, multiple needs of children and families—through the reform of existing systems and services, rather than the addition of new programs. External technical assistance proved invaluable in helping cities create the political and psychological atmosphere that encouraged and enabled stakeholders to work together. The external financial support provided credibility and legitimacy, and helped compensate for local time spent in reform activities.

In summary, the Casey Foundation is convinced that communities that have undergone *New Futures*-like efforts are better prepared to respond to new challenges and opportunities, and that they function as whole communities, represented by collaborative bodies that are accountable for their actions and capable of making decisions, setting priorities, and developing and implementing plans.

Related Findings of the National Workforce Assistance Collaborative

The National Workforce Assistance Collaborative's (NWAC) work aligns with many of the findings of the BCL project and the Casey Foundation. NWAC believes that change is constant, that coalitions are a viable mechanism for developing effective regional workforce development systems, that successful coalitions require collaboration, and that there are a number of steps to take to ensure the establishment of a successful coalition.

The NWAC reports that leading companies are joining together with educators, government, and other community stakeholders to do whatever it takes to get well-trained employees. Most companies lack the resources to build a workforce development system alone and need to collaborate to align and coordinate workforce development; as a result, coalitions are being formed to target specified needs and are being established based on geographic region, industry cluster, specific groups of workers, or issues such as education reform focusing on helping educators at all levels better meet the needs of employers.

Most importantly, NWAC recognizes that an effective workforce development system must meet the needs of multiple constituencies and that a region can have multiple coalitions that address these different needs. In turn, these coalitions must align and coordinate their efforts in order to build an effective workforce development system. In so doing, they form a comprehensive system that is capable of meeting a community's workforce development needs.
NWAC recommends the following process of establishing successful coalitions—a process that mirrors that of the BCL project and its training materials and technical assistance.

1. Joining forces when someone or some group decides to act and collaboration begins. The key factors for success at this point are:

- The right people must become involved and all must become committed to the effort.
- Recruitment of members must take into consideration who will bring clout, commitment, and diversity to the table.

- A core leadership team must be formed to provide credibility and legitimacy to the group effort.

2. Defining the problem begins with a need assessment. The results of the needs assessment will provide a common base of knowledge that will enable the group to focus on common issues.
3. Common issues are the basis for developing a shared vision, the design of short- and long-term solutions, and strategic planning.
4. Strategic planning involves the development of realistic goals that are both understood and accepted by all group members, and the definition of measurable outcomes.
5. Implementing the solution to produce desired outcomes requires good communication among all parties, active participation of all stakeholders, sufficient resources (financial, human, and other), and the establishment of mechanisms to monitor implementation, evaluate progress, and revise the plan, as needed, to meet the objectives.
6. Change is constant and collaborations need to be cultivated and maintained. Time and effort should be devoted to preparing for inevitable and ongoing change, and specific strategies must be developed to build the management capabilities necessary to sustain the effort.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The experiences of the BCL project, *New Futures*, and NWAC are the basis for the following recommendations for community-based reform. Interagency collaboration and coalition-building require extensive preparatory work before community planning can begin. Collaboration requires continual work as communities develop and implement plans. And collaboration requires continuous evaluation and redirection when indicated.

1. Reform must begin with a willingness to change from within a single agency, with a single program administrator. In order to help stakeholders understand and accept the need for change, it is recommended that:

- Stakeholders be provided with clear, complete, and consistent information that explains the reasons for change and fully describes the impact change will have on the multiple interests of stakeholders. There must be clarity of purpose, design, and expectations.
- Expected outcomes of change be feasible and meaningful to service providers.
- Benefits of change and consequences of not changing be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.
- Incentives and support be provided to motivate and sustain change.

2. It takes time to develop a community-based foundation for reform. Reform requires fundamental changes in systems, institutions, and services, and, as such, requires significant preparation, planning, and implementation time.

Collaboration is more than a politically-correct statement of compliance. It is recommended that:

- Sufficient time be allowed to engage all stakeholders, conduct needs assessments, establish interagency collaboration, and build coalitions that have the capacity to sustain change processes over time.

3. Collaboration and coordination require a common language and knowledge base. It is recommended that:

- Communication gaps, inadequate or incorrect information, and lack of awareness among community stakeholders be addressed through group efforts.
- A clear and consistent focus be developed, communicated, agreed upon, and maintained among the diverse perspectives of stakeholders.
- A group vision and mission be defined and accepted by all stakeholders.

4. Local ownership is imperative - imposed control is deadly. It is recommended that:

- External support promote local ownership.
- All stakeholders be engaged as early as possible to develop a sense of ownership.

5. External support should be readily available and deployed on terms mutually set by the community and external support agent. It is recommended that external support include:

- Resource support in terms of funding to compensate for time and other costs related to the process of community-based planning for change.
- A presence and support to provide credibility and legitimacy to the effort and to even the political playing field — allowing small agencies to have a voice equal to that of larger institutions.
- Ongoing and up-to-date information about issues and the need for change.
- Ongoing and individualized technical assistance in the processes of interagency collaboration, coalition-building, community planning, and implementing and evaluating change.

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BUILDING COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING

BCL CASE STUDIES

Seven case studies were selected as representative of the BCL project. They include a new community-based planning site that has been involved with the BCL project for only six months, as well as more mature sites that have been involved for between one to three years. Both urban and rural regions are represented. The case studies illustrate the diversity of BCL community-based planning groups in terms of group membership, vision, mission, and goals. Each case study includes the group's self-assessment of (1) progress made toward interagency collaboration and coalition-building and (2) the impact of the community-planning process on adult learning outcomes, the improvement of services, the development of a seamless system of services, and community resource development.

The case studies are compiled from data collected from a variety of evaluation techniques, including questionnaires, likert scales, and self-assessments of group outcomes. The data have been condensed for ease of reading and, as such, only present a thumbnail sketch of each BCL community-based planning group and its accomplishments. Conclusions follow the presentation of the case studies.

BCL CASE STUDY ONE

Demographic Information

The group serves a predominantly rural, mountainous county. There is a declining tax base due to the demise of steel and coal industries, and an increasing unemployment rate that is typically the highest in the state. Approximately 23 percent of the population have functional literacy problems, 13 percent have severe literacy problems, and five percent are currently receiving some form of public assistance.

Involvement with Team PA *CareerLink*

The BCL group is a member of the local Team PA *CareerLink* and is disseminating information about the *CareerLink* system and its significance as it relates to all members of the BCL group.

Members of BCL Group

Active membership includes representatives from a vocational-technical school, an intermediate unit, the county literacy council, the county Job Center, the county library, the career and technology center, a regional economic development organization, two higher education institutions, a welfare-to-work program, two social services agencies, a local industry, a health coalition, the local school-to-work program, and the United Way.

Most group members were recruited by word-of-mouth; personal invitations worked best. The challenge was often selecting the right contact person at a particular agency or business. The most common barrier to consistent participation in the group has been the many other meetings agencies have needed to attend—many being related to the local establishment of the *CareerLink*. A few local employers or business organizations are involved in the group, but the group is striving to get more active business participation. U.S. Bank is planning to join the group. Group leadership varies, although one or two people usually keep things moving. Meetings are held monthly and the meeting location rotates among stakeholders allowing group members to see the facilities and resources offered by other agencies.

The BCL Group Vision and Mission

- To provide a comprehensive, community-wide service delivery structure for adult learners.
- To consolidate all similar collaboratives into one and weld this into a seamless group to provide the highest possible level of adult basic and literacy education services.

1998-99 BCL Group Goals

All goals have been achieved, at least in part or on a modest scale.

1. **To bring together business and agency stakeholders.**
2. **To promote each stakeholder.**
3. **To further develop the group mission and goals.**
4. **To further develop strategies to reach goals.**
5. **To improve functional literacy in the county.**
6. **To upgrade skills of the unemployed.**
7. **To increase awareness of programs and services.**

Self-Assessment of Impact of BCL Group

The following were accomplished as a result of the BCL group.

Impact on Adult Learners

It is estimated, based on data supplied by agencies, that approximately 15 percent more clients are being served. County-wide, services are now reaching previously unserved, hard-to-reach clients due to the increase in literacy funds and sites. Services are more sensitive to clients' needs and the county assistance office and employment service are more aware of agencies that can help clients. Specifically, there has been an increase in:

- Number of clients served.
- Number of literacy sites.
- Variety of services now offered.
- Awareness of available services.
- Linkages assisting adult learners and cooperation/referrals for adult learners.

Impact on the Improvement of Services

Virtually all agencies are on a first-name basis now and have shared information about services and literacy data. Specifically, there has been:

- An increase in communication/cooperation between agencies.
- An increase in agencies' knowledge of services, operations, and staff of other agencies.
- Less competitiveness among agencies.
- A combining of literacy services and a sharing of facilities.

Impact on Development of a Seamless System of Services

Agencies are in the processing of developing, a seamless system of adult learner services.

- Existing services have been coordinated more smoothly among agencies.
- A case management approach has been instituted to involve many services addressing the multiple needs of adult learners and referrals across agencies have increased and improved.

- The group is planning to pilot one uniform client in-take form and most client assessments have been improved.
- There has been an increase in the number of referrals among agencies.
- There has been an increase in agencies' awareness of client problems and needs.

Impact on Resource Development

Collaboration has resulted in more literacy funds, more interagency cooperation county-wide, and interagency consolidation on grants.

- The group has been successful in applying for and receiving two grants that will help local adult literacy providers better serve adult learners.
- Collaboration has resulted in a local industry now housing a family learning center.
- Several agencies are now conducting cross-training.

Self-Assessment of Community Planning Process

1. Short- and long-term goals to improve the community planning process have been set and agreed upon, and some short-term goals have been attained.
2. Short- and long-term goals to improve the delivery of services have been set and agreed upon and some short-term goals have been attained.
3. Desired outcomes have been defined and some have been achieved in part or whole.
4. Leadership is moving the group toward attainment of its vision and goals.
5. Members are committed to collaborating to attain group vision and goals.
6. Communication is strong and positive within the group.
7. Communication among group members is strong and positive outside the group.
8. Turf issues and concerns have been resolved.
9. The group includes a diverse representation of stakeholders sharing an interest in and commitment to adult learning.

BCL CASE STUDY TWO

Demographic Information

The community being served is predominantly rural with several small towns. Approximately 29 percent of the adult population are educationally disadvantaged, 11.9 percent have less than an eighth grade education, 18.7 percent are without a high school diploma or GED and three percent are on public assistance. Lack of jobs is a barrier to self-sufficiency; the unemployment rate is approximately 8.9 percent. There is a very limited county transportation system that creates a problem for people who lack their own transportation. There is also a lack of quality infant, toddler, and school-age child care.

Involvement with Team PA *CareerLink*

BCL members representing adult basic and literacy education, the Job Center, Head Start, the community college, and JTPA are involved in monthly *CareerLink* meetings.

Members of BCL Group

Active members include representatives from the literacy council, Head Start, a community college, the Job Center, a JTPA program, the county prison, the county assistance board, the economic development board, the county action committee, a local corporation, a vocational-technical school, the public library, an area school district, a local newspaper, the housing authority, and a community hospital. Local commissioners and the courthouse are non-participating members of the group.

Group members were recruited by letters of invitation. The group is trying to increase local business involvement. The greatest barrier to active participation in the group has been all of the Team PA *CareerLink* meetings.

1998-99 BCL Group Goals

All goals have been achieved, at least in part or on a modest scale.

1. To educate the community about agencies that provide assistance to adult learners.
2. To provide written recruitment materials to assist providers and the public in general.
3. To begin a family literacy program in the county.
4. To become a member of Team PA in some capacity.

Self-Assessment of Impact of BCL Group

The following were accomplished as a result of the BCL group.

Impact on Adult Learners

- More clients are working

Impact on the Improvement of Services

- Agencies have a better understanding of adult literacy needs in the county and what the community has to offer the adult learner.
- Agencies have become more flexible and are serving clients in day and night programs for those who are working.

Impact on Development of a Seamless System of Services

- Referrals have increased among agencies.
- The adult literacy center, Job Center, and county assistance office are working together to serve mutual clients' needs.
- Agencies are discussing uniform in-take and case management procedures

Impact on Resource Development

- A multi-agency proposal for family literacy program was developed and submitted.
- The literacy council and Head Start have a formal agreement to recruit tutors from Head Start staff for Head Start families; the literacy council is training tutors.

Self-Assessment of Community planning process

1. Short- and long-term goals to improve the community planning process have been set and agreed upon, and some short-term goals have been attained.
2. Short- and long-term goals to improve the delivery of services have been set and agreed upon and some short-term goals have been attained.
3. Desired outcomes have been defined and some have been achieved in part or whole.
4. Leadership is still forming.
5. Members are committed to collaborating to attain group vision and goals.
6. Communication is improving within the group.
7. Communication among group members is strong and positive outside the group.
8. Most turf issues and concerns have been resolved.
9. The group includes a diverse representation of stakeholders sharing an interest in and commitment to adult learning.

BCL CASE STUDY THREE

Demographic Information

The BCL community being served is 73 percent urban and 27 percent rural. There is no public transportation available at night, there is limited parking within the cities if a car is available, and child care is a problem. Not all locations are easily accessible due to the mountainous terrain of the area. Approximately 28 percent of adults over 25 years of age have less than a high school education.

Involvement with Team PA *CareerLink*

The BCL group has attended *CareerLink* meetings and is listed as a contributor to the Career Development Marketplace for the county grant proposal. Two members of the group have been nominated to be members of the Workforce Investment Board.

Members of BCL Group

Active members include representatives from the adult literacy provider, the Center of Economic Development, local two newspapers, two colleges, an intermediate unit, Head Start, RSVP, the housing authority's learning center, the ALTA Program, Catholic Social Services, and a volunteer action center. Other members not able to attend meetings regularly include the public library, the housing authority, a tutorial center, the Salvation Army, and a volunteer program.
The greatest barrier to participation in the group has been scheduling meetings that the majority can attend. The group is trying to get business involvement.

The BCL Group Vision and Mission

- To reach as many adults as possible through a variety of programs.
- To support lifelong learning as a means to self-sufficiency and personal growth.

1998-99 BCL Group Goals

All goals have been achieved, at least in part or on a modest scale.

1. To increase awareness of educational services.
2. To help adults access programs that provide supportive services and opportunities for their families in real-life learning projects and situations.
3. To establish a network organization where knowledge of literacy events and programs for adults can be shared within the group and with the community.
4. To develop informational materials about literacy services and resources for distribution in the county.
5. To serve as the community's primary source in marketing and promoting the concept of lifelong learning by coordinating training, tutoring, mentoring, sharing, and partnering.
6. To develop coordinated and non-competitive plans to increase collaboration, interagency activities, and to demonstrate positive outcomes of partnerships.

7. To secure funding for adult learning that can contribute to and receive support from the Chamber of Commerce, business consortiums, and other economic development agencies.
8. To act as a referral service.

Self-Assessment of Impact of BCL Group

The following were accomplished as a result of the BCL group.

Impact on Adult Learners

- Many adults have been referred for supportive services.

Impact on the Improvement of Services

- The group is developing a unified tutor training program for all agencies.

Impact on Development of a Seamless System of Services

- A 24-hour phone number is available for information about agencies' services and programs.

Impact on Resource Development

- The group sponsored a workshop to increase knowledge of materials available to adult education providers.

Self-Assessment of Community Planning Process

1. Short- and long-term goals to improve the community planning process have been set and agreed upon, and some short-term goals have been attained.
2. Short- and long-term goals to improve the delivery of services have been set and agreed upon and some short-term goals have been attained.
3. Desired outcomes have been defined and have been achieved in part or whole.
4. Leadership is moving the group toward attainment of its vision and goals.
5. Members are committed to collaborating to attain group vision and goals.
6. Communication is improving within the group.
7. Communication among group members needs to improve outside the group.
8. Some turf issues and concerns have been resolved.
9. The group needs a more diverse representation of stakeholders sharing an interest in and commitment to adult learning.

BCL CASE STUDY FOUR

Demographic Information

The BCL community being served a blend of suburban, urban, and rural. Transportation does not connect the county as a whole, making it difficult to attend programs offered in different parts of the county. Additionally, transportation in urban areas is not always available. Approximately 9 percent of the adult population have less than a ninth grade education, 22 percent lack a high school diploma, and 10.7 percent live below the poverty level.

Involvement with Team PA *CareerLink*

The BCL group has a representative attending *CareerLink* steering committee meetings. He reports back progress and any new developments. The local *CareerLink* is scheduled to open September 1999.

Members of BCL Group

Active members include representatives from the Private Industry Council, a local university, Human Opportunities, OVR, the county assistance office, Child Services, Catholic Charities, ParentWise, Manpower, Child Care Assistance Project, the county transit authority, Mental Health Services, adult basic education providers, and WIC.

Members recruiting other members, in person, has worked well. Time for meetings is the biggest barrier, especially given all of the meetings related to WIA.

The BCL Group Vision and Mission

- To assist learners to successfully complete adult education classes or to meet personal goals by sharing the responsibility of assisting then in finding supportive services.
- To establish a comprehensive system of literacy education, supportive services, and follow-up services in key geographic locations throughout the county through collaborative partnerships between exiting community service agencies and adult education providers.

1998-99 BCL Group Goals

All goals have been achieved, at least in part or on a modest scale.

1. To develop a seamless system of services.
2. To reduce duplication of services.
3. To develop uniform client intake and assessment procedures.
4. To improve interagency referrals.
5. To establish satellite groups in the county and then to bring groups together.

Self-Assessment of Impact of BCL Group

The following were accomplished as a result of the BCL group.

Impact on Adult Learners

- There has been an increase in the number of learners meeting educational, employment, and personal goals.
- More learners are completing GED preparation and passing the test.
- Adults are receiving more reliable information and services are being delivered on a more timely basis.
- Client access to services has improved through the BCL network of service providers.
- More adults are being served from harder to reach areas.

Impact on the Improvement of Services

- There is a lot less duplication of services.
- Agencies have been inviting other agency staff to attend workshops.
- A better system of collaboration has been established which helps agencies be more flexible with their scheduling.

Impact on Development of a Seamless System of Services

- A better referral system has been established. No longer do agencies have to call other agencies to find out the type of services they offer and the type of documentation they need. This saves time for the agency and eliminates the frustration for the learner.
- There is a stronger relationship among agencies and a deeper understanding of agency policies, services, and procedures— agencies are all on the "same page" now.
- With client permission, assessments are being transferred to other agencies as needed, and client information and attendance sheets are now being circulated among agencies which eliminates duplication of paperwork.
- Referrals are being improved and increased among agencies.

Impact on Resource Development

- Agencies are working together on providing services for State Family Literacy, Even Start, and ABE programs.
- The group is a collaborator in many proposals that are being submitted, for example, the Read to Succeed proposal.

Self-Assessment of Community Planning Process

1. Short- and long-term goals to improve the community planning process have been set and agreed upon, and some short-term goals have been attained.
2. Short- and long-term goals to improve the delivery of services have been set and agreed upon and some short-term goals have been attained.
3. Desired outcomes have been defined and some have been achieved in part or whole.
4. Leadership is beginning to move the group toward attainment of its vision and goals.
5. Members are committed to collaborating to attain group vision and goals.
6. Communication is strong and positive within the group.
7. Communication among group members is strong and positive outside the group.
8. Turf issues and concerns have been resolved.
9. The group includes a diverse representation of stakeholders sharing an interest in and commitment to adult learning.

BCL CASE STUDY FIVE

Demographic Information

This BCL group is a new (1998-99) community-based planning site. It serves a predominantly rural county. Approximately 12 percent of adults have less than an eighth grade education, more than 22 percent lack a high school diploma. Transportation presents the greatest barrier to participation in educational services; child care is also a significant concern.

Involvement with Team PA *CareerLink*

The BCL group is represented in local *CareerLink* meetings.

Members of BCL Group

Active members include representatives from an intermediate unit, local adult basic and literacy education programs, a business college, a technology center, and the Private Industry Council. The biggest challenge has been starting the group while the *CareerLink* proposal was being written.

BCL Group Vision and Mission

Adult education needs the support of each provider to avoid duplication of services and unnecessary expenditures of time and resources. The group intends to ensure that educational services are provided in the most effective and efficient manner.

1998-99 BCL Group Goal

To interface within the system of the WIA initiative in such a way as to maximize each organization's individual resources.

Self-Assessment of Impact of BCL Group

The following were accomplished as a result of the first six months of the BCL group.

Impact on Adult Learners

- Adult learners have received more reliable and timely information regarding services.

Impact on the Improvement of Services

- Agencies have a better understanding of adult literacy needs and each other's missions and services.
- Agencies are collaborating to the degree that they can at this time; there is some uncertainty on the part of some agencies in regard to how the WIA regulations will have an impact on their operations.

Impact on Development of a Seamless System of Services

- Referrals have increased with increased trust among agencies.
- BCL has afforded adult education to offer "an education package" that begins with specific testing and moves a learner through a logical progression of steps that are necessary to attain their ultimate goal. This education package is the direct result of the BCL collaboration.

Impact on Resource Development

- The group has submitted proposals that would involve multiple group partners and resources.
- There has been some cross-training.

Self-Assessment of Community Planning Process

1. An initial set of short- and long-term goals to improve the community planning process have been set and agreed upon, and some short-term goals have been attained.
2. An initial set of short- and long-term goals to improve the delivery of services have been set and agreed upon.
3. Some desired outcomes have been defined.
4. Leadership is beginning to move the group toward attainment of its vision and goals.
5. Members are committed to collaborating to attain group vision and goals.
6. Communication is strong and positive within the group.
7. Communication among group members is strong and positive outside the group.
8. Turf issues and concerns have been resolved.
9. The group is building a diverse representation of stakeholders sharing an interest in and commitment to adult learning.

BCL CASE STUDY SIX

Demographic Information

The community served is a predominantly rural region lacking public transportation and adequate child care. The community is also suffering from the loss of an organized literacy council and is plagued with high rates of spousal abuse, teen pregnancy, and school drop out. Approximately 30 percent of all adults lack a high school diploma.

Involvement with Team PA *CareerLink*

The *CareerLink* is awaiting grant approval and agencies are working to define roles.

Members of BCL Group

Active members include representatives from five area school districts, local businesses, the county assistance office, a local college and a business college, a career and technology center, the child and adult development organization, Head Start, the housing authority, the county information and referral agency, the county library, a school-to-work program, the Job Center, cooperative extension, a state correction institution, a regional economic development center, a local newspaper, the Salvation Army, and an intermediate unit.

The literacy council has recently disbanded due largely to lack of strong leadership. Industry representatives are not in regular attendance at meetings but are linked to the BCL through its members. Three local businesses have underwritten several BCL group initiatives including donations of office equipment and payment of the application fee for non-profit status.

Geographic distance and daytime meetings are the biggest barriers to participation in BCL meetings. However, when they cannot attend a meeting, members do remain involved through phone calls.

BCL Vision and Mission

- To establish a communication bridge so that all providers speak with one voice to literacy and adult education issues within the county.
- To encourage collaboration among literacy providers, adult educators, support services, and business/industry for the purpose of promoting existing adult education services to the residents of the county.

1998-99 BCL Group Goals

1. To become a GED test site for all of the county.
1. To establish a web site on the Internet.
2. To work as a mentoring group with another county.
3. To establish a brochure for distribution.
4. To set up a cooperative, joint agency of adult education site with JTPA.

5. To expand BCL group membership.
6. To continue work with CareerLink and establish strong linkages with Team PA/school-to-work.
7. To offer GED testing for the entire county and to obtain a commitment of funding from the county commissioners.
8. To serve as an active speakers bureau.
9. To collaborate with a local college to secure a technology grant.

Self-Assessment of Impact of BCL Group

The following were accomplished as a result of the BCL group.

Impact on Adult Learners

- Re-establishment of the GED testing site.

Impact on the Improvement of Services

- The group is trying to rescue the literacy council as it is dissolving.

Impact on Development of a Seamless System of Services

- The biggest challenge going into community-based planning was a ten-year history of turf issues—these turf wars have only recently subsided and the group is now very focused. The BCL grant gave the community a way to view competition positively plus it gave agencies a common goal that could strengthen each agency. Establishing a shared vision was a big part of the problem and the BCL's vision has enervated the group.
- Agencies and the community have gained a much better understanding of local adult literacy needs and adult basic and literacy education services through the development of a portfolio of services, the establishment of a speakers bureau, and a number of regular newspaper articles that have appeared for the first time.
- Collaboration has increased among agencies, in fact, some agencies' willingness to collaborate is outstanding.
- Collaboration is now beginning with neighboring counties.
- The group is now being recognized as a change agent in the county.
- The group is involved with the school-to-work one-stop delivery system.

Impact on Resource Development

- Two collaborative grant proposals have been submitted.
- The group has re-established GED testing and the county commissioners have committed funding for GED testing.
- Facilities have been donated for GED testing.
- Computer labs have been offered as part of the collaborative technology proposal.

Self-Assessment of Community Planning Process

1. Short- and long-term goals to improve the community planning process have been set and agreed upon, and some short-term goals have been attained.
2. Short- and long-term goals to improve the delivery of services have been set and agreed upon and some short-term goals have been attained.
3. Desired outcomes have been defined and have been achieved in part or whole.
4. Leadership is moving the group toward attainment of its vision and goals.
5. Members are committed to collaborating to attain group vision and goals.
6. Communication is strong and positive within the group.
7. Communication among group members is strong and positive outside the group.
8. Most turf issues and concerns have been resolved.
9. The group includes a diverse representation of stakeholders sharing an interest in and commitment to adult learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Although each case study depicts and addresses local conditions and needs, they share certain commonalities. All groups are working toward the development of a seamless system of services that will better serve the multiple needs of adult learners in their communities. All community-based planning groups have set long- and short-term goals and, to date, all have attained at least some of those goals. Some groups have established a diverse membership that includes some representation from business and industry; others are in the process of recruiting members and are trying to engage local businesses in the group.

Communication among group members appears to be strong in most groups and few turf issues remain unresolved. Across sites, there has been a significant increase in awareness among agencies in terms of the services other agencies provide and the clients they serve. Referrals among agencies have increased in almost every site.

Most groups identified transportation as a barrier to participation in adult basic and literacy educations services and are working to find solutions to circumvent the problem. Some groups identified child care as another barrier to participation in services.

All groups reported significant improvements in the delivery of services that have been the result of BCL project efforts. All sites documented increases in coordination among services due to the interagency collaboration established within their BCL group. BCL community-based planning groups have also been successful in developing multi-agency proposals and have received funding for these proposed programs.

More adult learners are being served as a result of BCL community-based planning efforts. More reliable and complete information is being provided to adult learners, enabling adults to take advantage of all of the opportunities available to help them attain personal, educational, and employment goals. Transitions between services are much smoother and support services are now readily available. Uniform client intake and assessment procedures are being implemented in some sites, and the outcome has been significant in terms of decreasing client frustration leading to increased client participation and retention in services. New educational opportunities are also being created through BCL collaboration efforts.

The biggest challenge has been the coordination of community collaboratives; this was largely due to the unusually high number of meetings related to the WIA and Team PA *CareerLink* initiatives. BCL groups are working with their local *CareerLink* and other community-based groups to identify common areas for collaboration. This is an emerging issue that spans the public and private sectors and involves business collaboratives, as well as education, health care, and other social service coalitions.